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SUBJECT: SPLM - APRIL SHOWERS BRING JULY RESHUFFLES

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Ministerial absenteeism rates have soared in Juba as talk of a comprehensive reshuffle of SPLM ministers and commissioners in both Khartoum and Juba gains increasing credibility. Reportedly, presumptive candidate lists were frozen in mid-June as Vice President Riek Machar objected to a "Dinka-heavy" list of appointees, and back-room negotiating has continued in the days since. GOSS officials, diplomatic observers, and assumed candidates themselves maintain a reshuffle is inevitable: Pagan Amum must be replaced in Khartoum, the seat of the late SPLA Affairs Minister Dominic Dim Deng must be filled in Juba, and President Kiir has publicly committed himself to the appointment of a second female governor in the South. Whether that becomes Presidential Advisor Rebecca Garang or GNU State Minister for Energy and Mines Angelina Teny Machar will demonstrate much about the SPLM some two months after the party's national convention. END SUMMARY.

THE VACANCIES: ACTUAL AND PRESUMED

¶2. (SBU) The SPLM has a possible six vacancies to fill at present: GNU Minister for Cabinet Affairs, GOSS Minister for SPLA Affairs, Presidential Advisor for Decentralization, and should the movement to install Arop Moyak in Abyei hold, the Chairman of the Southern Sudan DDR Commission. Changes within the SPLM Constitution will also require that the GOSS Health Minister and the Chair of the Southern Sudan Peace Commission step down in order to assume the SPLM state chairmanships in Unity and Eastern Equatoria states, respectively.

¶3. (SBU) However, FM Alor told ConGen July 12 that Secretary General Pagan Amum and Kiir have agreed to a modified policy by which state party chairs can choose their fate: either keep their current ministerial slots or relinquish their SPLM state chairman titles. (COMMENT: Such a move effectively blunts Vice President Riek Machar's pre-convention machinations to install "his people" into positions of leadership within the party, and hands a sizeable leadership victory to Kiir, whatever the outcome. END COMMENT). Blue Nile State Governor Malik Agar has told ConGen staff he wishes to resign as the state's governor in January 2009 in order to concentrate on the affairs of the party - Kiir could move to replace him now, should Agar's skills be deemed more useful elsewhere. This would, however, be a tremendous loss for Blue Nile state during a critical time. The SPLM General Secretariat remains to be established, and some party insiders believe that various undersecretaries may be transitioned from the ranks of the Government of Southern Sudan into the party's administrative organs - as a means of assuaging otherwise bruised egos.

SPLA AFFAIRS

¶4. (SBU) The position of SPLA Affairs Minister has been vacant since the May 2 air crash that killed Dominic Dim Deng. Despite thrice

refusing the position since 2005, SPLA Chief of General Staff Oyai Deng Ajak says he is now interested in the job - but insiders believe that Kiir is unlikely to award it to him. Undersecretary for Regional Cooperation (and presidential insider) Cirino Hiteng Ofuho told ConGen PolOff that he believes Kiir's decision rests between either Ajak or Jongelei Governor Kuol Manieng. However, Ajak remains vocal in his criticism of Kiir to ConGen staff, particularly with respect to forthcoming elections and internal matters affecting the SPLM. Despite his propensity for reconciliation, it is unlikely Kiir would want to place such a voice in his cabinet.

15. (SBU) Jongelei Governor Kuol Manieng remains the favored candidate among the military's rank and file, who believe he will ensure they are paid on time. Manieng's candidacy is also supported by Rebecca Garang, a purported candidate for Jongelei's gubernatorial vacancy should Manieng accept the ministerial post. The Governor himself has been circumspect about the possible move. At the margins of the National Convention, he told ConGen that he was not interested in the position, but would be willing to go where Kiir needed him. Despite recent public statements rejecting the position, diplomatic observers and contacts in Bor believe he will accept the position if asked by Kiir.

16. (SBU) Manieng's critics (and in some circles, competitors) are less tight-lipped. Rival dark-horse candidate and retired SPLA Brigadier General Garang Mabil described Manieng as "rude and rigid," and was undeterred by arguments that perhaps increased discipline was what the SPLA now needed. Mabil countered that the SPLA required better, and more visionary leadership, before launching into a derisive and dismissive attack on the Chief of General Staff. Mabil, evidently confident in his own abilities on the battlefield, is apparently not alone in that belief. The SPLA

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has pressed him into service to lead stabilization and civilian disarmament activities in Warrap State, where recent tribal clashes have displaced an estimated 11,000 people. Before his current assignment in Warrap, he was stationed, despite his reserve status, in the Abyei region, and charged with overseeing Misseriya OAG integration into the SPLA. "Had I still be there," he commented with no lack of self-aggrandizement, "the Abyei crisis would have never occurred."

17. (SBU) UN sources believe Unity State Governor Taban Deng Gai is also a candidate for the ministerial position, but Post is less convinced. Despite being wildly unpopular in his state, and faced with a near-daily battle of defending himself from personal attacks by supporters of GNU State Minister for Energy and Mines Angelina Teny Machar, Kiir quashed internal dissent within the state SPLM Chapter on July 4, publicly stating before a crowd wielding anti-Taban placards that "I did not come to Bentiu to remove Taban, because I believe he is doing a fine job of managing the affairs of this state, and he has my full trust and support." According to SPLM officials traveling with the Chairman, Kiir then pulled SPLM leadership aside to chastise them at length, noting "if you want (GOSS Health Minister) Montieng to be Governor, you must elect him in 2009."

FINANCE

18. (SBU) Vice President Riek Machar is actively campaigning for the removal of Finance Minister Kuol Athian Mawien. Machar has agitated for Dinka Minister Paul Mayom to be placed on the chopping block as well; while Mayom is likely safe, some in the GOSS believe Mawien's performance during the Sudan Donor Consortium negatively impacted the size of international contributions, and while the President has supported his policies to date, the Minister has been unable to rectify the financial damages wrought by Juba's first finance minister, sacked in 2006 for credible charges of corruption. Some in the GOSS believe current Minister for Information Gabriel Changson Chang could become Finance Minister, while still others indicate that the role could be filled by Nhial Deng Nhial. Nhial himself is coy about what ministerial positions he is being pressed to accept by Kiir and "local constituents." While Changson was

regarded as an adept minister fully capable of keeping suspect director generals in check, UNDP Technical Advisor Fiona Davies does not believe the Finance Ministry could withstand its fourth leadership reshuffle in three years, and has offered that viewpoint to Minister for Presidential Affairs Luka Biong Deng.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

¶9. (SBU) Arguably, the most disturbing chatter about a government reshuffle remains the possibility of Lam Akol being inserted as Minister for Regional Cooperation. Not so much a page out of the "keep your enemies close" playbook as a numbers game, Undersecretary for Regional Cooperation has allowed that if Akol were to be placed in the job he personally would move to another function within the Ministry of Presidential Affairs - "I will not work for him." While few are thrilled with such a possibility, SPLM insiders argue that Kiir is fairly certain the GOSS Health Minister, under pressure from Machar, will step down from his ministerial position to assume the Unity State SPLM Chairmanship, and current Regional Cooperation Minister Barnaba Benjamin holds the correct medical credentials to take on this portfolio.

WOMEN GOVERNORS

¶10. (SBU) The drama of the SPLM National Convention -- the near-subterfuge by Vice Chairman Riek Machar and prima donna antics of Secretary General Pagan Amum -- were surpassed by President Salva Kiir Mayardit's public concession that the Government of Southern Sudan was not doing enough to visibly support the SPLM's mandate of "25% representation for women" and his commitment to appoint a second women governor in the South. During speeches at the SPLA's silver jubilee one week later, Rebecca Garang made it clear that she considered herself a candidate. Should Garang's recovery from surgery in London make her unable to accept a gubernatorial slot, Teny's appointment in Unity (despite the political baggage of being married to the VP) becomes more likely, particularly as Kiir moves to cement Machar's loyalty to the party and blunt his criticism that the new leadership will not be "diverse enough for the needs of the South."

¶11. (SBU) GNU State Minister for Energy and Mines Angelina Teny

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Machar has actively and directly courted the votes of Nuer in Unity State - her husband's bank-rolling of Governor Taban Deng Gai's ouster as SPLM State Chairman has been regarded by many as the opening salvo of his wife's gubernatorial campaign. Senior GOSS officials opine that should Teny take the seat in Bentiu, Gai would assume her duties in Khartoum - a reshuffle similar to that which occurred between erstwhile Jongelei Governor Philip Thon Leek and present Governor Kuol Manieng.

MACHAR'S EDICT

¶12. (SBU) Despite widely held belief that Machar's own standing within the GOSS is safe despite active discussions during the SPLM National Convention to remove him from the Vice Presidency, Machar continues to work his own slate of candidates for a reshuffle. He has reportedly met with Kiir on three separate occasions to discuss the need for "an ethnic balance" within the cabinet, with allegedly little reaction by the President. Minister for Industry and Mines John Luk Jok opined to ConGen that Machar would be better served by placing his energies behind saving his wife's career in Khartoum. "Angelina has done absolutely nothing for us," Jok argued, "she is always traveling to Bentiu to disturb Taban, her interactions with me are marginal, and her reports to the party superficial. The Chairman continues to be frustrated by her performance."

KHARTOUM

¶15. (SBU) As he noted to us in May and reconfirmed more recently, Pagan Amum is shortly due to step-down as GNU Cabinet Affairs Minister in order to devote himself fully to his duties as SPLM *Secretary* General. Foreign Minister Deng Alor professed ignorance as to Kiir's plausible candidates for Amum's position, noting only that "the decision was a difficult one," and that Kiir continued to meet with party officials on the subject. CDA has been informed by Pagan himself in Khartoum that Akol may be in the running for the Cabinet Affairs position, however. Despite his continued antics in Upper Nile State which recently pitted Amum's Shilluk faction against Akol's Shiluk faction in the sacking of the Speaker of the State Assembly, Kiir and Akol reconciled following Akol's humble appearance before Kiir in the period following former GNU State Minister for Justice Alieu Alieu and SPLM GNU Presidential Advisor Telar Deng's dismissal from the SPLM.

COMMENT

¶16. (SBU) Kiir's expected reshuffle appears to be an additional step toward party consolidation following the SPLM National Convention. Moreover, it appears to be a legitimate attempt to actualize recent GOSS Council of Minister discussions on decentralizing government to the state level - something that can be effective only with high-caliber, and highly capable, ministers in Juba. SPLA Affairs remains the most vital slot to fill in the coming weeks, and the most likely to draw scrutiny from Khartoum. Mawien's removal from Finance would be unfortunate, but it could serve to make the SPLM immune from fresh corruption allegations in the run-up to the 2009 elections. Should it hold, the most significant development in any of the machinations outlined above is Kiir's continued - and seemingly increasingly successful - moves to contain Machar. That alone should strengthen GOSS and SPLM performance considerably in the months to come.

FERNANDEZ